



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS
Washington, D.C. 20231
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/212,107	12/15/1998	JOSE I. ARNO	4070-317.CIP	8874

23448 7590 12/18/2002

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY / TECHNOLOGY LAW
PO BOX 14329
RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC 27709

EXAMINER

NGUYEN, NGOC YEN M

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
----------	--------------

1754

DATE MAILED: 12/18/2002

18

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/212,107

Applicant(s)

ARNO ET AL.



Examiner

Ngoc-Yen M. Nguyen

Art Unit

1754

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 30 September 2002.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-58, 61 and 62 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 1-20, 22-25, 28-50 and 62 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 21, 26-27, 51-58, 61 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on September 30, 2002 has been entered.

Claims 1-20, 22-25, 28-50, 62 are withdrawn from further consideration pursuant to 37 CFR 1.142 (b) as being drawn to nonelected inventions and nonelected species, there being no allowable generic or linking claim. Election was made without traverse in Paper No. 8.

Group V and species c) were elected in Paper No. 8.

Claims 51, 53 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention.

For claims 21, 26-27, 51-58 Applicants pointed out support for "no caustic reagent" may be found on page 20, lines 9-10 and page 28, line 20, however, such support cannot be found (it is unclear if Applicants have a different version of the specification than the instant specification). It is noted that on page 46 of the instant

Art Unit: 1754

specification, lines 5-7, it is disclosed that "... allows the 2-stage scrubber system to operate without using chemical injection agents or large amount of fresh water", but it is unclear if the "chemical injection agents" would be the same as "no caustic reagent". It is also noted that the "chemical injection agents" are disclosed on pages 22-23 of the instant specification, these agents are reducing agents such as, sodium thiosulfate, ammonium hydroxide and potassium iodide (note page 23, lines 6-12) to enhance the remove of fluorocompound, however, NH_3 can also be used to remove OF_2 (note page 28, lines 17-21) instead of the fluorocompound or caustic can be used to remove silane (note page 33, lines 27-31). Thus, there is no clear support for the claimed limitation of "the second scrubbing zone contains *no* caustic reagent".

For claim 52, again support for "neutral water" cannot be found at page and line numbers pointed out by Applicants. Neutral water is mentioned on page 33, lines 11-16, but for the step of removing silane, not for the 2-step scrubbing process.

For claims 21, 26, Applicants are requested to point support, by page and line number for "said second contacting chamber has a smaller volume than that of said first contacting chamber", as required in the instant claims 21, 26 and "the second scrubbing zone has a smaller diameter than the first scrubbing zone" as required in the instant claims 55-56. If support for limitation "second contacting chamber has a smaller volume than that of said first contacting chamber" is found on page 46, lines 3-4, which states "smaller column size...", then when claims 55-56, which are dependent on claims 21, 26, require that the second contacting chamber (second scrubbing zone) has smaller diameter than the first contacting chamber (first scrubbing zone), this implies that the

Art Unit: 1754

scope of claims 21, 26 would be broader, i.e. the diameter of the second contacting chamber can be the same or bigger than the first contacting chamber and there is no support for such scope.

For claims 57-58, it is disclosed in the instant specification, page 47, lines 30-36, that the first column has a diameter of 21" and the second column has a diameter of 4", the ratio of the second diameter to the first diameter is $4/21$ (0.19) which can be "about one fifth" (about 0.20) as required in the instant claims, however, the limitation of "about one fifth" also includes values slightly higher than 0.20 and there is no support in the instant specification for any value higher than 0.20.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 21, 26-27, 55-56, 55-58, 61 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Macedo et al (5,405,590).

Macedo '590 discloses a process for cleaning exhaust off-gas from a thermal processing unit containing contaminants, the process comprising:

passing exhaust off-gas through an initial wet exhaust off-gas scrubber unit having a first basic solution containing at least one base reagent and water,

contacting the exhaust off-gas with a spray of said solution to cool the exhaust off-gas by partial evaporation,

reacting at least one contaminant from the exhaust off-gas with the base reagent in a liquid stream,

Art Unit: 1754

said partial evaporation and reaction resulting in concentration and precipitation of said at least one contaminant from the exhaust off-gas,

further introducing the exhaust off-gas to at least one secondary scrubbing unit having a second basic solution containing at least one base reagent and water resulting in further removal of contaminants from the exhaust off-gas,

removing solid precipitate from the initial exhaust off-gas scrubber unit in the form of a wet sludge (note claim 1).

As shown in the Figure, the off-gas entering scrubber 20 at inlet 20A encounters a high velocity, high pressure water/reagent spray jet 41 (note column 3, lines 65-67). During normal operations, especially when acid gases are being scrubbed, the reaction of the scrubbing reagents with acid contaminants occurs above the spray nozzles 41 where a misty curtain of the solution is normally formed (note column 4, lines 30-37). The purified off-gas then travels up through conduit 50 into a second stage scrubbing unit 80 (note column 4, lines 7-8). The off-gas exhaust is further scrubbed by a reagent solution sprayed downward from spray nozzles 106. Spray nozzles 106 produce a high velocity solution curtain across the top cross section of the scrubber 80 which effectively removes the majority of the leftover contaminants from the exhaust gases emitting from scrubber 20.

Macedo '590 fairly teaches that acid gases are removed in the first scrubber and the leftover contaminants are removed in the second scrubber. The leftover contaminants would include water scrubbable components other than acid gas components as required in the instant claim 26.

As evidenced by the figure, Macedo '590 fairly teaches that in the first scrubber, the scrubbing liquid and the exhaust off-gas are flowing concurrently and in the second scrubber, they are flowing countercurrently.

Art Unit: 1754

The difference is Macedo '590 does not disclose the size, the diameter of the second scrubber as compared to the first scrubber.

However, Macedo '590 discloses that the first scrubber is used to remove acid gases and the second scrubber is used to remove the leftover contaminants. Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to optimize the size of the two scrubbers in order to obtain the best results, i.e., for removing the most contaminants with the lowest total cost.

Claims 21, 26-27, 55-58, 61 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dahlstrom et al (4,147,756).

Dahlstrom '756 discloses a system for removing gaseous sulfur dioxide and chloride components from a gas stream (note claim 1). From Figure 1, in the scrubbing device 11, the gas inlet 13 is connected in communication with the upper end of the housing of the scrubbing device and the introduced gases flow downward therefrom to an outlet conduit 14. The scrubbing liquid is discharged in the housing by means such as spray nozzles 15 and flows downwardly cocurrent with the gas flow (note column 3, lines 7-13). The system further comprises a scrubber 51 connected to receive, via the conduit 14, the gases treated in scrubber 11 (note column 4, lines 23-26). In scrubber 51, the scrubbing liquid is discharged in the scrubber housing by liquid outlet means 53, and flows downward countercurrent to the gas flow (note column 4, lines 47-55).

In the process of Dahlstrom '756, the first scrubber removes hydrogen chloride gas and other chlorine components. The second scrubber removes sulfur oxides. The second scrubber would also remove any other residual contaminants in order to produce an exhaust gas which is suitable for discharging into the atmosphere.

The difference is Dahlstrom '756 does not disclose the size of the second scrubber.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to optimize the size of the two scrubbers in order to obtain the best results, i.e., for removing the most contaminants with the lowest total cost.

Claims 21, 26-27, 51-58, 61 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Knapp (6,019,818).

Knapp '818 discloses a process for simultaneously quenching and scrubbing a hot gas stream (note claim 1). Knapp '818 further discloses that the process can be conducted in a column which need not be as tall as a conventional spray quencher column and if desired, a polishing scrubber may be used to further purify the gaseous products (note first full paragraph in column 3). Knapp '818 teaches that the column contains packing (note Figure 1) and that it is well known in the art that the scrubbing liquid can be water, a basic solution, or an acidic solutions (note column 2, lines 10-19). Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use any known scrubbing liquid in the art for the process of Knapp '818.

The differences are Knapp '818 does not disclose the details for the "polishing column", i.e., flow direction and size, diameter, and flow rate as compared to those of the first column.

Macedo '590 is applied as above to teach for the second scrubbing column, it is conventional to operate it in countercurrently manner (note Figure).

For the size of the polishing scrubber, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to optimize the size thereby

Art Unit: 1754

the diameter and flow rate of the polishing column in Knapp '818 in order to efficiently further purify the gaseous products.

Applicant's arguments filed September 30, 2002 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicants argue that claim 52 as amended recite a process according to claim 21 wherein the gas component is silane and the scrubbing liquid in the first contacting chamber and second chamber is neutral water.

It is noted that as amended, claim 52 does not require that the gas component is silane. Moreover, since the removal of silane is species b) of the independent claim 21, which is a non-elected species, if such species is incorporated into the elected species c), there would be a shift from a "single disclosed species" to a combination of species and such shift is not allowed after the elected species has been examined on the merit.

Applicants argue that the neutral water used as scrubbing liquid is effective whether in just one scrubbing unit or two sequential scrubber units.

It should be noted that the claimed invention has multiple embodiments, each embodiment requires different features, for example for embodiment 2, silane can be destroyed when using neutral water as the scrubbing liquor (note page 33, lines 11-16), and for embodiment 3, the use of two-stage scrubber system is to solve the problems of single scrubber units encountered in prior art effluent gas treatment systems (not page 44, line 17-page 47, line 36). However, there is no disclosure that what is required for embodiment 2 is also required for embodiment 3, and vice versa. Thus, there is not sufficient support for the use of "neutral water" in the two-stage scrubber system.

Applicants argue that in the instant specification, "silane can be abated in a water scrubber by use of a caustic chemical injection agent such as KOH" and such KOH is described as a "caustic chemical injection agent".

In Applicants' specification, it is disclosed that the "efficiency of the column is therefore high and allows the 2-stage scrubber system to operate without using chemical injection agents or large amounts of fresh water" (note page 46, lines 5-7), however, there is no clear definition of what are the "chemical injection agents". Since the claims require a "negative limitation", i.e. "contains no caustic chemical injection agent", support for such limitation must be explicit.

Applicants argue that independent claims 21 and 26 are limited by the fact that the second scrubbing unit has a small volume than that of the first scrubbing unit and claims 55-56 further limit the second scrubbing unit to a smaller diameter vessel than that of the first scrubbing vessel, therefore the scrubber system of claim 55 and 56 not only have a smaller volume than the first scrubbing unit but also has a smaller diameter than the first scrubbing unit.

Granted that claims 55-56 further limits claims 21 and 26, however, as stated in the above rejection, since claims 55-56 further limit claims 21-26 to a second scrubber having a smaller diameter than a first scrubber, the scope of claims 21 and 26 must be broader which would includes the scenario of the second scrubber having a smaller volume than the first scrubber (as required in Applicants' claims 21, 26) but having a bigger diameter (with a shorter height). Such scenario is not disclosed in Applicants' specification.

Applicants argue that it is well settled in the law that the relative term "about" is not objectionable per se, provided the disclosure gives one skilled in the art sufficient guidance to enable him to ascertain the scope of the claims with reasonable certainty

Art Unit: 1754

and provided the term in question adequately distinguish the claimed subject matter from the prior art.

It should be noted that the term "about" is not objected or rejected. However, what being rejected is the support for the word "about". In the specification, the only ratio disclosed is 4:21, which does not provide sufficient support for the claimed value of "about one-fifth".

Applicants argue that Dahlstrom and Macedo both disclose a two-stage scrubber having a second scrubbing unit that is as large or larger than the first scrubbing unit.

Granted that in the figures, the second scrubbing unit in Dahlstrom and Macedo was shown as being bigger than the first column, however, the figures are not to scale, the second column might have been drawn bigger in order to clearly shown all the details. There is no disclosure in the either reference requiring the second scrubber to be bigger than the first scrubber. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to optimize the size of the scrubbers in order to achieve the desired results with minimum capital and operating cost.

Applicants argue that it is impossible to recognize by the teachings of the prior art that a specific volume of the second scrubbing unit is necessary to maximize the effectiveness of the scrubbing system.

It should be noted that in Knapp, the second column is a "polishing column", just as that of Applicants' process, and in Macedo, the second column is to effectively remove the majority of the leftover contaminants from the exhaust gases emitting from the first scrubber (note column 5, first full paragraph), thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to optimize the size of the second scrubber in order to achieve the intended goal.

Art Unit: 1754


The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Examiner Ngoc-Yen Nguyen whose telephone number is (703) 308-2536. The examiner is currently on a part time schedule.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mr. Stanley Silverman, can be reached on (703) 308-3837. The fax phone number for this Group is (703) 872-9311 (for OFFICIAL After Final amendment only) or (703) 872-9310 (for all other OFFICIAL faxes). UNOFFICIAL fax can be sent to (703) 305-6078.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0661.

N. M. Nguyen
12/15/02


N. M. Nguyen
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1754